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Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations

Culture of peace

Letter dated 21 December 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the outcome Declaration of the Eighth Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, which was held during the period from 19 to 21 October 2010 in Doha, State of Qatar (see annex).

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 14 and 15.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 21 December 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

21 October 2010

Eighth Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue

19-21 October 2010
Doha, Qatar

Declaration

Over 220 participants and representatives of the three celestial religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, from some 60 countries, gathered at the Eighth Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, which was held in Doha from 19 to 21 October 2010, on the theme of the role of religion in raising children.

The Conference was opened by the Minister of Justice of Qatar, Mr. Hassan Bin Abdulla Al-Ghanim, who welcomed participants and affirmed the pressing need to make recommendations that underlined the importance of religion in the upbringing of children. The closing statement was made by the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Mr. Ghaith Bin Mubarak Al-Kuwari, who emphasized that religious scholars were excellent role models for future generations.

Participants considered three major issues and made the recommendations that are set forth below:

1. The part played by the family in raising children:

The family bears particular responsibility and has an excellent opportunity to create an environment that promotes tolerance and respect for neighbours and other people. Participants expressed concern that many children who lacked the blessing of family support could go astray. There was an urgent need for children to look beyond their own needs in their personal relationships, and replace detrimental competitiveness by concern for others. Children are by nature idealistic and affected by both political and domestic violence.

The Conference therefore calls upon all faith communities to shoulder their responsibilities with regard to the family, and support it as a basic component of society and the place in which children can first learn dialogue, cooperation and respect for others.

2. The role of educational, social and media institutions:

Schools, the media and social institutions can play an important part in preparing youth to carry out their local and global responsibilities. Society must confront all forms of discrimination and stereotyping.

The Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities have all experienced persecution and lack of comprehension. It is consequently important that ignorance

should be overcome and differences respected. The Conference therefore calls upon schools and media institutions to enable youth to seek the truth, make wise choices and lead a life of dignity.

Given the tremendous technological advances that have taken place in the media, there are equally tremendous opportunities to disseminate values. There is, however, also a danger that the media will be abused. The Conference urges all the faith communities to encourage educational, social and media institutions to develop curricula, social projects and media programmes that will promote respect for other religions and cultures and peaceful coexistence between peoples.

3. The impact of places of worship on children's education:

Just like schools, universities, the family, and social and media institutions, places of worship can have a major impact on children and youth. They can also be used to spread a culture of violence and extremism. The Conference considered such issues as religious upbringing and contemporary challenges in the age of globalization; how to restore the effectiveness of worship in the upbringing of children; and the impact of worship in inculcating peaceful religious principles.

The Conference urges all religious communities to uphold places of worship and their role in preparing youth to assume responsibility for implanting the values of amity, compassion and cooperation at the local and international levels.

A group of students from Qatar and the Netherlands enriched the Conference with an intervention on the youth perspective on interfaith dialogue and the role of religion in the upbringing of children. That intervention fulfilled the wish that had been articulated by many Conference participants to hear about both the positive and the negative experiences of youth.

In conclusion, Conference participants expressed their gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and to the Government and people of Qatar for their kindness and hospitality. They also thanked the Conference organizers, the Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue, the Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of Qatar.